

Claim Amendments:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A method of making individual sealing members for containers from a sheet of material, the method comprising the steps of:

conveying a sheet of material in a travel direction relative to a die cutter to bring a portion of the sheet into alignment with the die cutter;

moving the die cutter into engagement with the sheet and cutting a plurality of sealing members from the sheet, the cutter comprising a plurality of cutting surfaces shaped and arranged for cutting a pattern of sealing members from the sheet, wherein each of the sealing members comprises a base portion having a center point and first and second extending tabs, and wherein the pattern includes positioning the sealing members so that:

(a) one of the extending tabs of a first sealing member extends into a space between the base portion of a second sealing member and the base portion of a third sealing member;

(b) a first reference line extends diagonally relative to the travel direction of the sheet, wherein the first reference line intersects the center point of the base portion of the first sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the first sealing member, and further intersects the center point of the base portion of a fourth sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the fourth sealing member;

(c) a second reference line extends in a generally perpendicular direction to the first reference line, wherein the second reference line extends through the center point of the base portions of the second and third sealing members; and

(d) a distance between the center points of the first and fourth sealing members is greater than a distance between the center points of the second and third sealing members; and

separating the sealing members from the sheet of material.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein the first reference line is further positioned tangentially to the base portion of the second and third sealing members.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim [[2]] 1, ~~further comprising a second reference line that extends in a generally perpendicular direction to the first reference line, wherein the second reference line extends through a center point of the base portions of the second and third sealing members, thereby establishing wherein the pattern includes~~ a first diagonal row of sealing members comprising the second and third sealing members.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, further comprising a second diagonal row of sealing members that is parallel to the first diagonal row of sealing members, wherein ~~the first diagonal row is parallel to the second diagonal row, and wherein~~ the second diagonal row comprises the first sealing member.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first extending tab of each of the sealing members is oriented approximately 180 degrees from the second extending tab of the same sealing member.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the base portion of each of the sealing members is circular.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein a perimeter of the base portion of each of the sealing members corresponds with a perimeter of a container opening onto which the sealing member will be placed.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing the plurality of sealing members to a container sealing operation.

10. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the sheet of material is a continuous sheet of sealing material.

11. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the sheet of material is a first discrete sheet of sealing material, and wherein the method further comprises the step of conveying a second sheet of material in the travel direction to bring a portion of the second sheet into engagement with the cutter.

12. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the first reference line is oriented at an angle of at least about 45 degrees relative to the travel direction of the sheet.

13. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pattern is repeated along the length of the sheet in the travel direction to provide a plurality of identical sealing members while maximizing the area of the sheet that comprises sealing members.

14. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the travel direction of the sheet of material is generally perpendicular to the direction of movement of the die cutter when the cutter is cutting the plurality of sealing members from the sheet of material.

15. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one extending tab of each sealing member is positioned to be adjacent to a base portion of at least one adjacent sealing member.

16. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the space between the base portions of the second and third sealing members is at least partially bounded by arcuate portions of the second and third sealing members.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the die cutter is a rolling die cutter comprising a plurality of die blades arranged around a perimeter of the rolling die cutter.

18. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the sheet of material comprises a heat-transfer layer and a heat-activated layer.

19. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein the heat-transfer layer is a foil layer and the heat-activated layer is an adhesive layer.

20. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of separating the plurality of sealing members from the sheet of material comprises punching the sealing members from the sheet in a direction that is generally perpendicular to the travel direction of the sheet of material.

21. (original) The method of claim 1, in combination with the steps of providing the sealing members to an induction sealing system for securing each of the sealing members to a container opening by induction sealing.

22. (currently amended) A method of maximizing a quantity of individual sealing members cut from a sheet of material having first and second opposite edges, wherein the sealing members each comprise a base portion and two tab portions extending from the base portion and positioned on approximately opposite sides of the base portion, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a cutting mechanism for cutting individual sealing members in a pattern of rows that are generally parallel to each other, wherein each row is diagonally oriented relative to the first and second edges of the sheet, and

wherein at least one of the tab portions of each of the sealing members is positioned in a space between the base portions of two adjacent sealing members, and wherein at least one of the tab portions of each of the sealing members includes a curved distal end portion that is spaced from the base portion of the sealing member from which it extends;

moving a sheet of material relative to the cutting mechanism to bring a portion of the sheet into alignment with the cutting mechanism; and

engaging the cutting mechanism with the sheet and cutting a plurality of individual sealing members from the sheet.

23. (currently amended) A method of making individual sealing members for containers from a sheet of material, the method comprising the steps of:

conveying a sheet of material in a travel direction relative to a die cutter to bring a portion of the sheet into alignment with the die cutter; and

moving the die cutter into engagement with the sheet and cutting a plurality of sealing members from the sheet, the cutter comprising a plurality of cutting surfaces shaped and arranged for cutting a pattern of sealing members from the sheet, wherein each of the sealing members comprises a base portion having a center point and first and second extending tabs, and wherein the pattern includes positioning the sealing members so that:

(a) at least one of the extending tabs of each sealing member extends into a space between the base portion of two adjacent sealing members;

(b) a first reference line extends diagonally relative to the ravel direction of the sheet, wherein the first reference line intersects the center point of the base portion of the first sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the first sealing member, and further intersects the center point of the base portion of a fourth sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the fourth sealing member;

(c) a second reference line extends in a generally perpendicular direction to the first reference line, wherein the second reference line extends

through the center point of the base portions of the second and third sealing members; and

(d) a distance between the center points of the first and fourth sealing members is greater than a distance between the center points of the second and third sealing members.

24. (withdrawn) A sheet of material comprising a pattern of cut sealing members to be removed from the sheet, each sealing member having a base portion and first and second extending tabs, wherein the pattern includes an arrangement of sealing members including at least one of the extending tabs of each sealing member extending into a space between the base portion of two adjacent sealing members.

25. (withdrawn) The sheet of claim 24, wherein the pattern further includes positioning the sealing members so that a first extending tab of a first sealing member extends into a space between the base portion of a second sealing member and the base portion of a third sealing member.

26. (withdrawn) The sheet of claim 25, wherein the pattern further includes positioning the sealing members so that a first reference line is positioned tangentially the base portions of second and third sealing members and so that the first reference line intersects the base portion of the first sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the first sealing member and further intersects the base portion of a fourth sealing member and a longitudinal centerline of the first and second extending tabs of the fourth sealing member.

27. (withdrawn) The sheet of claim 24, wherein the first extending tab of each of the sealing members is oriented approximately 180 degrees from the second extending tab of each of the sealing members.